

The Story of John

By

John C. Pischke

The future farmsteads of LaCrosse, Wisconsin and nearby villages were soon to become the home of the Pischke family, after arriving on the sailing ship "Anna", in the port of New York on September 9, 1867. Michael, a well respected cobbler and farmer, wife Rosina and family, including their youngest, Adolph, my great-grandfather, immigrated to this country first from Prussia, an independent kingdom before the unification of Germany and later from the city-state of Bremen, now the the city of Bermen, Germany. Traveling by foot and covered wagon, the family settled for a time in the area known as Green Bay, before venturing west.

The rolling hills, woodlands and coulees of southwestern Wisconsin reminded them so much of the old country, they decided to stay, set roots and proudly proclaim this new land as their own. Hard working farm families were known for their many children. One of Adolph's future sons was Melvin, my grandfather and the first of my lineage to be born in America in 1901. The family settled near North Bend, in Jackson county, where they both lived and were buried in the area and cemetery known as South Beaver Creek.

The church and its setting is an extremely beautiful and serene place of rest that I have enjoyed visiting since childhood.

My name is John Craig Pischke. I was born September 24, 1948 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin to Robert V. Pischke and Jacquelyn J. (Dunn) Pischke. As an infant, we moved to Grinnel, Iowa where my father attended college on the G.I. bill. Upon graduation, we moved to Davenport, then to Eldridge, a small town of 350 residents in the spring of 1955. I was among the last generation to attend an original one room country school. I remember the hitching rails for horses which lined the downtown street, the mighty locomotive and its routine stops at the 1871 depot and, as a child, I could never resist the fire bell in the center of town with its long tempting rope just aching to be pulled. North Scott Schools did not exist and all roads leading to and from town were gravel.

As a youth, my friends and I would gather together on Saturday nights to experience the horrors of the creature feature which always left an indelible impression on our young psyche. Later, the venture back home in the murky darkness served as the second feature, as our trek back to security was often more stimulating than the movie itself. We just knew there was a monster lurking behind every tree, to say nothing of the one waiting to grab us from under our own bed.

Small town living afforded us the opportunity to both walk and play in the middle of the street. We all thought we were Marshall Matt Dillon while engaging in our own personal gun fights at the corner of Second and Franklin. We passed the football while dodging traffic and played hide and seek in the moonlight with the city flag pole as home base. It was indeed a special time. Coon skin caps were the order of the day and, as superman was perpetually triumphant, so were young boys donning a dish towel as an imaginary cape. I learned to be a marksman while drawing a bead on several small targets inside our chicken house and, weather permitting, we would ice skate on what was affectionately known as "the slab." Most of all, we were entertained by a funny little man who would sing and dance while pulling his wagon through the streets of town. But, when truly bored we would set up our lawn chairs and watch the workers oil the streets.

Upon rising with the sun, Saturday mornings were especially sacred. After washing windows, sweeping the floor and restocking the coke machine in my dad's small pharmacy, there was still enough time to witness Tonto and the Lone Ranger, as they appeared out of nowhere to bring justice, as its own reward, to the great American west. To top off my morning and satisfy my spirit of adventure, I would hurry down to the creek to watch the tadpoles turn into frogs. Opie Taylor and Beaver Cleaver had nothing on me.

Yes, we always found ways to entertain ourselves. There were no cell phones, computers or high tech toys, so we would challenge each other to the longest walk with home-made stilts. Our garage was transformed into Madison Square Garden as we organized boxing matches with genuine Jack Dempsy gloves and placed inflated balloons on the spokes of our bicycle tires to make us sound cool. Playing cowboys and Indians was a standard pass-time, marbles and checkers

were always an option and, of course, we knew the name of everyone's dog, because wherever we went, we and our unleashed pets were always together.

I was also involved in scouting, however, many of my adventures were strictly on my own. With canteen, backpack, jack-knife and wieners, my friend Dennis and I were equipped to explore the wilds and conquer the world. By following a seldom used railroad track, we would always trek north, find a secluded spot along the route, set up camp, build a fire, dream big thoughts, confront an occasional hobo and wile away the day. What a joyous time it was for two imaginative young boys.

I may have been the only youth in America who filled a doctor's prescription at twelve years of age. In 1955, dad opened the first pharmacy in our town of Eldridge. For the first few years the store was located in our house. One night, I was home with my younger brother and sister and there was a knock at the door. An older gentleman was there requesting his medication. I called dad who was playing cards at the home of the doctor. After explaining the situation, he informed the doctor that he would have to leave. The doctor then said to dad, "Have John fill the prescription." I was rather familiar with the process as I used to spend time in the pharmacy watching dad. So now, it was up to me. I located the proper medication, counted out the exact contents on a medical tray with an instrument that looked like a butter knife, and packed the pills in the appropriate bottle with an adequate amount of fluffy white cotton. I typed up the label and counted out the appropriate change to complete the transaction. On that particular night I felt pretty grown up. I became so proficient that I found myself challenged again and came to the rescue on two other occasions.

Aside from mowing lawns, working for dad, baling hay and other chores around a farm, my first real job, requiring a social security number, was that of a part-time dishwasher at a small cafe (Circle Inn) down the street from our home. My hours were generally from 11:00AM to 2 or 3:00PM. For a young boy of twelve, this responsibility gave me a sense of satisfaction. Even though I earned just 35 cents per hour and docked for the amount of anything I ate, I did enjoy the socialization and working with others. However, as a growing boy who was constantly hungry, I was often times indebted to my employer at the end of the week rather than the employer being indebted to me. By the age of thirteen I was employed by the town's only grocery store, located at the corner of Second and

feathers". I remember the woven wire fenced-in yard with its vast array of colorful flowers. Even the cord wood was stacked in perfect order and the home-made bench outside the back door now serves as a coffee table in front of our couch today.

I would watch with delight as dad helped milk the cows by hand and oftentimes squirt the milk in the direction of the kittens. I would often help Aunt Lena dig for potatoes and carry in the wood. My solo walks along the wooded limestone bluffs were extremely serene and watching the men in the field during threshing season was always pleasing to the eye.

For much of what I enjoy, I believe I was born a century too late. I have always found both wonder and comfort in the past, for nothing can happen there that hasn't already been. As I searched old buildings and explored old trunks, I discovered many unique treasures and family photos, some of which we own and cherish today - but the memories are priceless.

While attempting to adjust to the seventh grade I oftentimes found myself being removed from class and forced to take up residence in the hallway: being I refused to study the unit on mythology. As someone who always enjoyed history, I wanted to study facts and not waste time on the study of a myth.

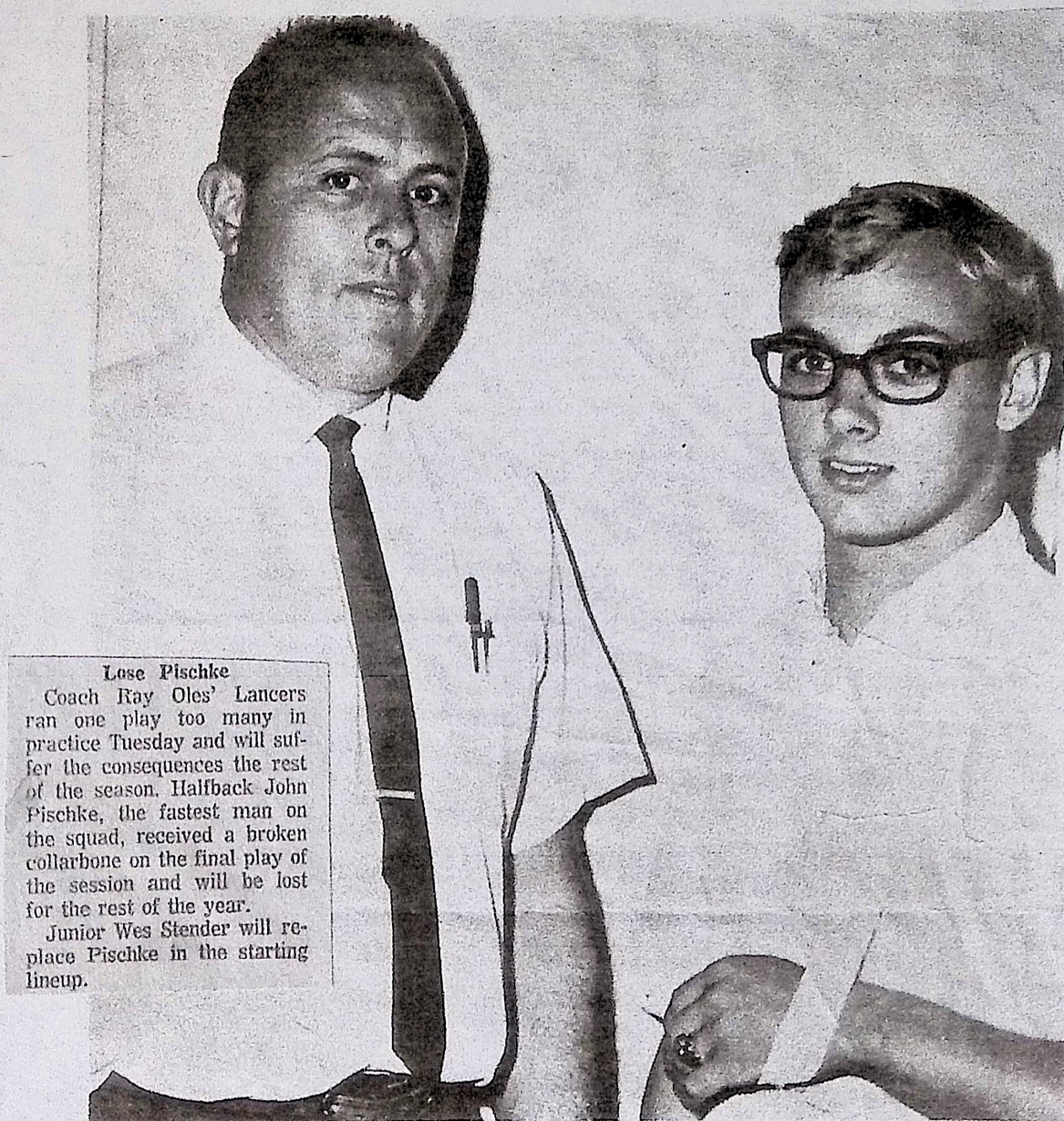
As time marched on, I settled into life, grew into manhood and excelled at summer ball. Trained by a family friend and former star pitcher for the Iowa Hawkeyes, I pitched three no-hit games of my own and hit a grand-slam homerun, as a 15 year old, in what is now known as Modern Woodmen Park. It proved to be one of my highlights as the Angels farmclub was warming up on the sideline and asked me to play for them on that very night. I was a proud American boy but also cherished my third generation heritage as a German-Norwegian.

As a graduate of North Scott High School in May of 1967, I was recognized as a National Thespian and honored with the "Best Actor of the Year" award as just a freshman. I served on the student council for three years, was a top 5 king candidate, as well as both a three sport and three year letter winner. I also served as president of our youth group at Faith Lutheran church. However, as an everyday occurrence, I was constantly being told by our ninth grade algebra

teacher to turn around and pay attention, as I would continually turn my head and stare at the pretty little girl named Pamela, who just five years later would become my wife. As a still somewhat awkward and slightly goofy teenage boy, I was also in love with Princess Iowana, the cute little Indian girl whose picture was prominently displayed on the milk carton inside the fridge.

For the most part I enjoyed my high school years, especially athletics but, due to injuries, my senior year proved to be a disappointment. For the second year, I was named the starting right halfback on our football team, but early in the season I broke my collarbone in three places, which ended my career. Even though I was elected co-captain for our homecoming game, the sting of misfortune hurt me deeply. Fortunately, I healed quickly and was able to return to the mat and rejoin our wrestling team. I usually wrestled at 145 lbs but, if needed, I would sometimes wrestle at 154. Early in the wrestling season of 1965-66, my opponent decided to tackle me instead of tying up or shooting for my legs. I allowed him to place his head on the side of my right hip. As he forced me backwards, I wrapped my arms around his waist. As I fell backwards I threw him off the mat with such force that I gave him a compound fracture to his arm. It was purely an accident but he could not continue, so I earned five points. The entire match lasted approximately three seconds.

The varsity track coach wanted me on the team when I was just a freshman, but I was still playing baseball and we had to make a choice, spring ball or spring track. I decided to compete as a sprinter during my sophomore year and was immediately placed on the top team. I ran again as a junior, but my senior and last year, was expected to be special. By the end of the season I had qualified for the state meet in three different events but, just prior to our trip to Des Moines, I tore my right hamstring and could no longer run. By then, I just wanted to graduate and move on. Looking back, I fondly remember my junior season running track. I recall the month of April, of that same year, 1966, as our high school 440 yd relay team, consisting of me as the lead off runner, Larry Goettsch, Butch Blanche and Bill Holland as our anchor, took first place at the Davenport relays. We were featured in the Quad-City Times and, of course, we were invincible. In the year 2000, I learned that Augustana College was to host the Senior Olympics. As a bright idea and convinced that we were still invincible, I resurrected our old original team, called the officials and they were intrigued. The North Scott Press got wind of the story and came to the track to take pictures.



Jose Pischke

Coach Ray Oles' Lancers ran one play too many in practice Tuesday and will suffer the consequences the rest of the season. Halfback John Pischke, the fastest man on the squad, received a broken collarbone on the final play of the session and will be lost for the rest of the year.

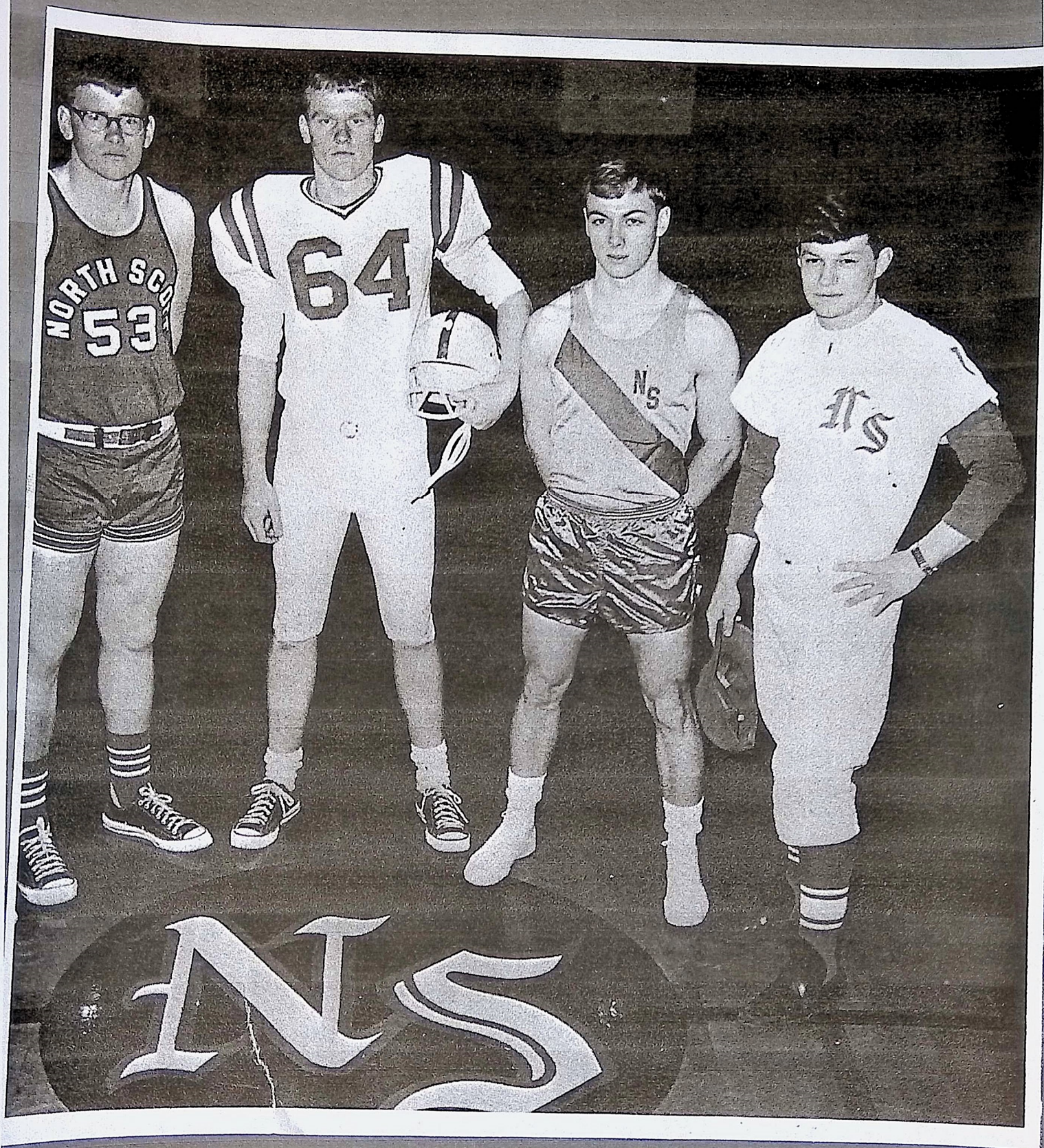
Junior Wes Stender will replace Pischke in the starting lineup.

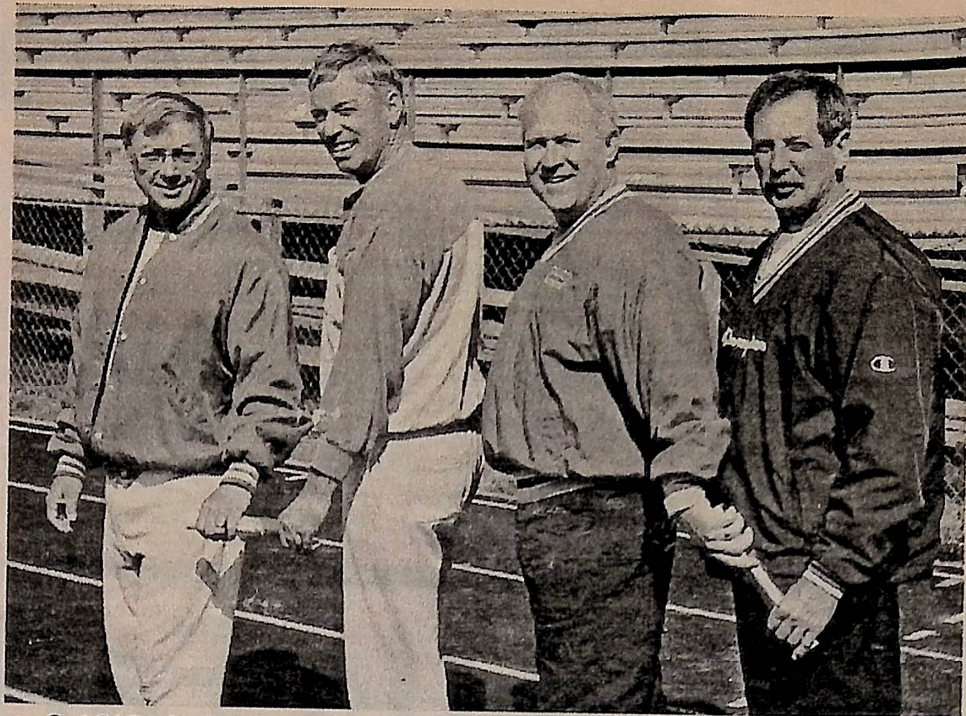
LANCER DEALT 'LOW BLOW' LAST TUESDAY

A low blow was dealt the North Scott Lancers' football team last Tuesday when veteran halfback John Pischke broke his collar bone in a practice scrimmage. John is a 160-pound senior, and will

be out of action for the remainder of the season. Coach Ray Oles, pictured with Pischke, now has only six returning lettermen left on the squad.

NS PRESS PHOTO





Out Of Retirement — These four former North Scott speedsters will be coming out of retirement tomorrow (Thursday) to compete in the Quad City Senior Olympics Augustana College's Ericson Field. In April, 1966, the four runners (l-r), John Pischke, Larry Goettsch, Butch Blanche and Bill Holland captured the 440-yard relay at the Davenport Relays. Since they have all now broken the 50-year-old age barrier, they will compete in the 4x100 relay at 3 p.m.

NSP Photo by Scott Campbell



We even had special uniforms recreated to match the ones we wore while in school. After thirty-four years, we thought it wise to practice, but in fear of pulled muscles or perhaps a coronary, we decided to not press our luck and just go with it. The big day came, the weather was perfect, our heads were clear and we were pumped. I set the blocks, the gun sounded and, once again, the glory of the moment was destined to be ours. Now, this special event consisted of only one heat, but I am proud to announce our second place finish. Aside from the fact that there were only two teams entered, we still had a good time.

After escorting Pam to three high school proms and then wasting two years of college, I enlisted in the military. I completed both my combat training and A.I.T at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, where I was decorated with the sharp shooter medal for both the M-14 and M-16 assault rifles. I was also honored with the expert medal for both hand grenades and the M-79 grenade launcher and rose to the rank of Specialist 5. I later became an active member of Carl Jacobson, American Legion Post 639 in Eldridge, serving as both historian and unit commander. I was also a member of the unit's Honor Guard and fulfill, to this day, a prominent role in Memorial Day services at historic Summit Church; where my recitation of "Prelude to the Pledge" continues to be an annual crowd favorite. I am very proud to have served my country but I was not a hero. I did, however, take an oath to both support and defend the constitution and to die for my country for which I am very proud.

For four seasons Pam and I owned and operated a small drive-in restaurant in Tipton, Iowa, but the hours and demands became so great on a growing family, we decided to sell. As a married adult with two young boys, I returned to school but, this time, I was ready and had a mission to fulfill. As busy as I was, my family still came first. I tried my very best to balance my responsibilities and desire to be a loving husband, father, full time student, part-time dishwasher and clerk, but Pam is the one who truly held us together during these extremely lean and pressure filled years. She was my rock.

I received my degree from St Ambrose College in 1981. As an honor student and double major in history education (American and World) and physical education and coaching, I later studied the sciences and proudly accepted the position as Youth Educator, for the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center.



As a teacher, I covered most of twelve counties, introducing the circulatory system and genetics of the blood to both physiology and biology students. I performed blood typing services (both ABO and Rh), prepared a monthly "wellness" letter to all employees and wrote the booklet, "Blood is the Heart of the Matter". As a respected educator, one teacher wrote, "I have found John to be an outstanding instructor. He has provided stimulating, thought-provoking lessons to my students in a highly professional manner". Another wrote, "...his knowledge and ability to relate to the students was superior". I was also asked to serve as the key-note speaker at the blood center's first Donor Appreciation dinner.

After several years and the onset of burnout, I found myself in search of a new challenge-perhaps something different. After extensive soul-searching and prayer, God showed me the way. Following training by the state historical architect and a master mason with a degree in biochemistry, I became certified by the State of Iowa in 19th Century Limestone Building Restoration. I was called upon to restore many projects listed in the National Historic Register. I worked hard and was extremely conscientious. As a result, I built a fine reputation, as my work was always historically correct. Even newly finished projects looked appropriately aged and weathered in appearance. As an Iowa City architect once told me, "the last thing you want is a compliment on your work because, if it looks like it's been restored, you have failed as a restoration mason." As a perfectionist, my projects were often featured in newspapers and magazines. Upon request, I would also travel giving lectures and slide presentations. I was also hired as "The Restoration Mason" for the historic Amana Colonies.

Through the years, I have enjoyed many interests. Pam and I loved to care for our country home and acreage on the outskirts of DeWitt, Iowa. I enjoy reading non-fiction history, woodworking, vacationing in Hayward, Wisconsin and backyard cookouts and campfires with family and friends. I also find great joy and inspiration in reading the Christmas story to my entire family on the night of Jesus' birth. I have always tried to live a peaceful life but, one day, I was pushed too far. Pam may recall that Sunday afternoon when a drunken assailant physically attacked a man of the cloth. I rushed to the preacher's aid and threw the attacker to the ground. I was so angry that I lost control and almost went too far. I physically beat this man into total submission. Several weeks passed. When the man had healed, he sought me out and confronted me. "I will never forget what you did to me," he said. I held my ground, looked the man squarely in the

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

In all of my experiences working John, I have found him to be an outstanding instructor. He has provided stimulating, thought-provoking lessons for my students in a highly professional manner. I also find him to be a very caring, pleasant and friendly gentleman. I enjoy having John in my classes!

Miss Linda Moross - Pleasant Valley High School

My students enjoyed the two days. Many commented on the pleasantry and speaking ability of Mr. Pischke. His knowledge and ability to relate to the students was superior. He answered their questions with great skills.

Mrs. Marge Classen - Notre Dame H.S. Burlington, IA

John definitely has the ability to communicate with young people. A class act by a class person.

Mr. Bob Corrick - North Scott Junior High

John handles students very well. He treats them with respect and they respond in kind. John is very professional in his procedures, but also related well to the students and their needs. John is able to communicate factual material and concepts to our students in a way that they can understand. I would like to thank John for an outstanding program.

Mr. Robert Walker - Bettendorf Middle School

I am pleased to inform you that John Pischke, Educational Coordinator, has conducted another outstanding program for our biology students (360) at Muscatine High School. I have 30 years of teaching experience and have had many presenters in my classes for various topics and John's program is one of the best. His program demonstrates his excellent communication skills.

Mr. Ron Kiser - Muscatine High School

Mr. Pischke's delivery and personal attributes bring out the very best in my students. Students respond well to his lecture. This is unusual for this group. He gains good respect quickly.

Ms. Diane S. Trix - Bettendorf High School

John is an experienced educator and represents the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center well. The students learned a great deal and enjoyed having him as a guest speaker. Mr. Pischke is a respected professional who is always a pleasure to work with.

Mr. Dan Boyd - Clinton High School

I thought John did an outstanding job in presenting this topic. This was a much greater learning experience for the students than they could have gotten from the textbook or me.

Mr. James Pirch - John Deere Junior High, Moline, IL

From the first time I met John Pischke, I have been impressed by his very friendly, professional competent presentation. You can be proud that he is representing your blood center.

Sister Donna Donovan - Assumption High School

John does a great job relating the information to the students at a level they can digest. It's always well presented and up dated from semester to semester. He was so knowledgeable that some of my students actually think he's a "Doctor". The following week, they referred to him as Dr. Pischke. "1st Class, A+."

Mr. Steve Saladino - Davenport West High School

John's personality lends itself to making the presentation highly effective. Thanks for your time.

Mr. Dale Harter - Washington J.H., Washington, IA

Mr. Pischke's interaction with the students was on a professional level yet he put the students at ease and asked questions in such a manner that the students were eager to participate. He also showed a great deal of respect for the students. He is an asset to your program.

Mrs. Mary Welling - Rock Island High School

These comments were mailed to the blood center's V.P. of Administrative Affairs.



eye and simply said, "Good, or I'll have to do it again." Still waters do indeed run deep.

Pam kindly tells me that I am a very talented singer and guitarist, but I have chosen to keep that private. I performed successfully in public on only one occasion; at a night spot in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. With regard to music, I enjoy a wide variety of sounds; both vocal and instrumental. I find the pop, rock and folk music of the 1950s and early 60s to be very enjoyable and much of the big band swing from the 1940s war years is also very pleasing. A string jazz quartet is extremely relaxing, the mellow sounds of Billy Butterfield's golden horn is soothing to one's soul and the timeless sounds of Beegie Adair's piano are truly moments to remember. But, who could forget the timeless hits of the Vince Guaraldi Trio - you know, the music of Charlie Brown. All this said, Elvis is still the King and due to front row seats for an Elvis dinner show in Las Vegas in February of 1974, the experience was extremely memorable.

Youth is oftentimes a wondrous experience. As one lives for the present and plans for the future, the dreams are endless and the possibilities are infinite. The passion for life and for what is yet to be is beyond compare but, as one grows older and past experiences beacon, one must stop and, at least for a time, relive the glory that was. I'm sure everyone remembers their first love. For many, however, it was not a young lady, but rather their first automobile. I had my heart set on a 1949 Chevy. I could only afford the talents of Earl Scheib, but I envisioned my dream to be purple in color with big silver moons and zebra-skin interior. I can't tell you what my dad said. I then set my sights on a 1948 airport limousine with four doors on each side. What a grand party car that would have been. Needless to say, that bright idea also never saw the light of day. I finally came to my senses and fell in love with a much more sensible and extremely well kept 1941 Studebaker Commander. When I bought it for \$500 in 1965, it only had 23,000 original miles and was in mint condition. I washed it at least once a week and used it for my dates with Pam on Saturday nights. Oh, how I miss that car.

Just one week before our nuptials, dad asked the question, "Don't you think you should buy a car?" At the time all I had was a 1930 Model A Ford. Even though we purchased a 1966 Dodge Charger, we used the Model A in the wedding and used it to depart from the church. We did not get far, however, as our former high school principal put the car up on blocks about ½" off the ground.

When attempting to drive away, the car would not move. How embarrassing, but our guests were all in on the prank and had a great laugh. At that point, everyone pitched in, picked up the car and off we drove.

I also love to care for and drive my miniature horses and cruise in my beautiful 1930 Model A Ford. For ten years, I lectured on both early American education and our Founding Fathers, in the 1870s one room schoolhouse at the Walnut Grove Pioneer Village and for fifteen years, wrote political commentary; most of which were featured in the North Scott Press. Senator Charles Grassley liked my editorials so much that he requested I continue to forward them to him so he, in return, could share them with those on the Hill. Perhaps my most rewarding accomplishment, however, was to see to it that there were always enough M&Ms on hand for the grandchildren.

I am so very grateful for both the drive and energy required to pursue my many and varied interests. I pray that there is no harm in the satisfaction of doing one's best and allowing oneself to feel delight over a job well done. Whatever the task, I have always tried to do my best and to ask in prayer for God's help and guidance. Whatever I may have accomplished in life, I owe to him, for the talents I have been given have come from God alone. To live your life in your own way, to reach for the goals you have set for yourself and to be the you that you want to be, that, in my estimation, is success.

At a young age, I was taught to take the initiative, to think for myself, weigh the options and to make my own decisions. I was never one to follow the crowd and would often times march to the beat of my own drum, believing in the philosophy, "Do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

In short, I was just a small town, backroads kind of guy. I praised the Lord, loved my family and country, adored animals; especially horses and golden retrievers, found serenity in nature and enjoyed both the quiet and simple pleasures of life. Regardless of setbacks, challenges and cruelties of life, especially when informed that I may never walk again, following my near fatal accident in 2013, and the fact that I was turned away by Genesis Hospital when told there was no one on staff with the expertise to even touch me, I always tried to maintain a positive can-do attitude. I believe that when pushed around by life,

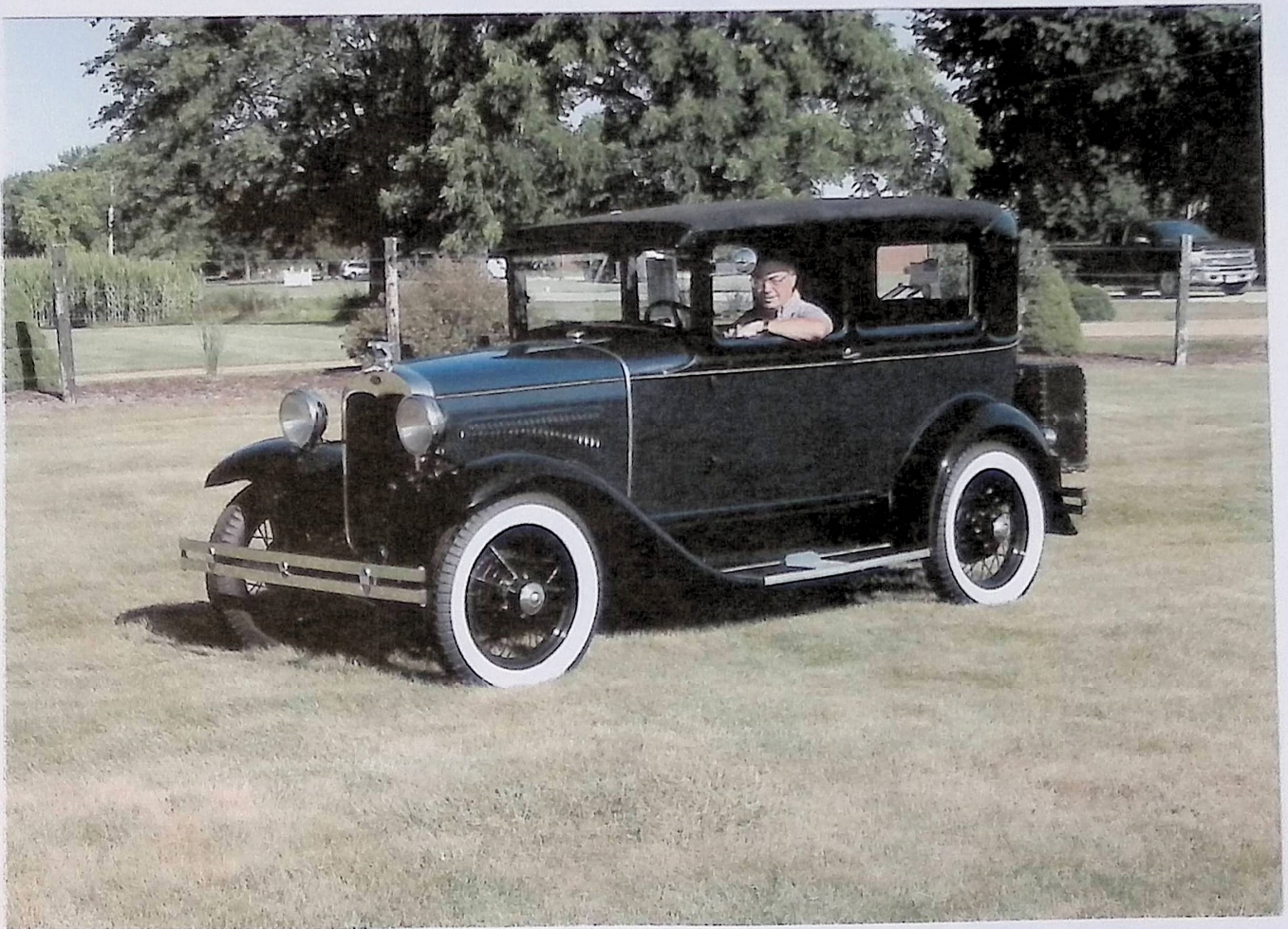


you have to push back. As just a regular guy, I am keenly aware of my many faults and limitations but, through it all, I consider myself to be a very blessed and fortunate man. Although never wealthy, I am humbled by the riches that truly matter.

Every six weeks or so, Pam and I find it necessary to take a trip to the landfill and she has always been willing to help. As a token of my appreciation, I treat my lovely bride to a nice dinner. We laugh together and fondly refer to this special outing as our "Dump Date".

I will always be thankful for the many experiences that have shaped my life, for most have proven to have been a blessing. My formative years and even beyond were also influenced by all the family gatherings and heart warming interaction at the home of my mother's parents, Roy and Louise Dunn. We grandkids referred to them as Grandma and Papa. They lived in a rather large two story arts and crafts era house at 2550 Middle Road, in Davenport, Iowa. Grandma and Papa moved from Lacrosse in the mid 1940s, and it was so very nice to have them nearby. I fondly remember their long screened-in porch that, even though crowded, served as the meeting place during the warm weather months. Grandma and Papa were wonderful hosts, as we celebrated most all major holidays at their home; and often in the company of my two uncles, Larry and Steve and their growing families. The dining room was large and grand, both in scale and decor and, to top it all off, Grandma was an excellent cook. Even today we reminisce about her delicious roast beef dinners and especially her homemade, from scratch, dinner rolls. Even though she always baked plenty, it was still not enough. Also, her homemade orange and lime sherbet and sugar cookies were especially tasty and always a special treat.

I recall the Easter egg hunts in their spacious backyard. The large Elm trees which shaded the entire spread, the backyard cookouts with family and friends and especially the large cherry tree with its many low hanging branches that we and even our small dog would climb. Thanksgiving dinners were also quite special, as her golden brown turkey was always cooked to perfection and prepared in a 1920s Roper oven at the foot of the basement stairs. Grandma lived in and maintained her beautiful home until she was well into her 90s. I miss her so much and will always cherish and long for those days.



As a Christian man, I have always tried to be a kind, thoughtful and loving husband and father. I am blessed beyond words that I was reared by two loving and nurturing parents who taught me right from wrong and instilled in me the values of how to be a man. Much has been said about a person's better-half but, my better-half is truly that, my better-half. Pam was my highschool sweetheart, soul-mate and devoted wife since June 27, 1970. At times, we have been faced with perhaps more than our share of difficult times but, we have endured them together, hand in hand and for better or worse.

We have been blessed with two exceptional sons, of which we are extremely proud. Randy was our first born and Mark our second. We have two endearing daughters-in-law, that being Barb and Melissa and five very special grandchildren in Andrew, Colton, Elizabeth, Addison and Matthew. I have also been blessed with a wonderful younger brother, Dick (Julie) and a loving sister, Jane (John Collins).

In closing, I have always been fond of saying, "Remember who you are, what you were taught and always try to be the best that you can be." May God Bless you all.

Sincerely,

John

P.S. Please continue for pictures and stories of close calls and near fatal accidents.



Close Calls and Near Fatal Accidents

#1 Over the years, I have often marveled at all the times I have cheated death but, just like the energizer bunny, I keep coming back. I am not one to take anything for granted, just very thankful for all the days that I have been given. I truly believe that every day is a gift.

As I recall, my first encounter was an automobile accident. It was early autumn of 1965, and I was driving home to Eldridge after picking up my sister who had spent the night with Grandma Dunn. I was driving north on what is now old 61, just north of Mt. Joy. A long line of traffic was heading south and an impatient driver decided to pass them all. When I noticed this fast moving car in my lane, I decided to head for the ditch but, when he noticed me, he decided to do the same. To avoid him, I quickly steered to the left but our cars sliced each other and ripped the right side of both cars almost completely off. The impact pushed me into the south-bound traffic and I hit a car with a man and pregnant woman inside. They ended up in the opposite ditch and my car spun around in a circle at a tremendous speed in the center of the highway. Glass, chrome and auto parts were everywhere. It was a close call. My sister Jane was shaken but fine, but my knuckles were white as snow. My reaction time was such that our lives were saved but my guardian angel must have been with me because I was a young and inexperienced driver. We were saved but rattled and extremely sore.

#2 During the summer, after my senior year, I was working as a roofer. We were working on two-story townhouses on 53rd St, just west of Brady St in Davenport. I slipped, fell two stories onto the ground and sliced the inside of my upper left arm on a protruding nail. It was quite a thud but I shook it off. I was bleeding badly so I wrapped the wound with my T-shirt and drove to the doctor in Eldridge. He saw me immediately, gave me several stitches and I drove back to work to finish the day. I was lucky as I had a date with Pam that evening.

#3 During my combat training at Ft Leonard Wood, Missouri in the fall of 1969, a young trainee dropped a live grenade directly in front of me. We were crouched behind a three foot high stone wall and the grenade landed on top of the wall about one foot from my face. The bomb would explode in three seconds. We didn't have much time, so we hit the ground and the deafening blast rattled my insides and lifted me right off the ground. If not for that wall, we would have died. I can still feel the blast to this day.

#4 I believe the year was 2007 and I was working as a restoration mason on an 1839, stone barn in downtown Solon, Iowa. I was perched on top of a section of scaffolding, stepped off the end and fell twelve feet onto the cement below. I had never experienced such pain. At that moment I thought for sure that I would die. A man across the street came to my rescue. He and another were somehow able to get me in a car and drove me to the clinic in town. Immediately thereafter, I was taken to Mercy Hospital in Iowa City because it was the closest hospital. The pain was nearly unbearable as I broke six ribs, punctured and collapsed my left lung, tore my rotator cuff and separated my left shoulder. We did not have insurance, so my care was minimal and it seemingly took forever to heal. A few months earlier, I stopped at the same barn to examine the upcoming project. While inside, I slipped on an icy inline and broke 2 ribs. While driving back home, I was stopped and ticketed for not wearing a seat belt. I explained my situation to the officer and he said, "it makes no difference to me." Due to the pain, it was nearly impossible to reach over and connect the belt but he waited and threatened me until I did. He refused to help me. Injury and verbal abuse was the story of the day.

#5 The year was 2001, I had just begun my restoration work for the historic Amana Colonies. It was a Friday morning about 7:30AM and I was traveling west on Highway 30 and was about to enter the town of Wheatland. I was traveling at a rate of 50 mph when a car T-boned me on the driver's side. At the last second I saw him approaching so I slid my body to the center of the seat while attempting to hold on to the steering wheel and not lose control. At the time, a semi-truck was on course to hit me head on. At the last second, I veered to the right, smashed into a sign but avoided a death-trap. I escaped serious injury but found myself extremely sore and bruised. My truck was totaled.

#6 July 26, 2013, was the day that will live with me forever. Again, I was traveling west on Highway 30 at approximately 7:30AM. I had just passed through the town of Lowden. As I approached a curve, I noticed a pick-up in the opposite lane traveling east. His vehicle was swerving from side to side and totally out of control. He entered my lane and drove right at me at a high rate of speed. My reaction was to take the ditch but he decided to do the same. I quickly turned left to avoid him which put me in the eastbound lane. I made that decision because no other vehicle was in sight. He then changed direction and came right at me. I am thoroughly convinced that he wanted to die. I could no longer avoid him. I said a prayer and asked God to save me. The collision was far and above anything I have ever experienced. When the impact was over I was badly hurt but didn't know it. I felt so much at peace and was confronted by an angel. I remember we talked for a while without moving our lips. He then said it was time to go. The rest is private. I was trapped in a burning truck and could not breathe due to both the airbag and thick black smoke. The next thing I remember were firemen, rescue vehicles and patrol cars everywhere. They extinguished the burning truck and attempted to release me from the wreckage. My right foot was forced completely through the firewall and I was trapped in the cab which had fully collapsed. In time, I was on my way to Genesis Hospital in Davenport, Iowa. My wife was told by the emergency room physician that they could not accept me because there was no one on staff with the expertise to even touch me. I was then rushed to University Hospital in Iowa City, where the department head, Dr. John Marsh, told me twice that they had only seen something this bad once before, but they would do all they could to help me. He informed me that, "If we are not successful, you will be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life." I broke my femur completely in half, destroyed my right hip almost beyond recognition, completely smashed the lower portion of my pelvis and tore all the muscles from the bones. With the exception of the muscles all had to be replaced. Due to the impact, everything was out of place and I was forced into traction for three full days before they could even begin their eight hour surgery. After surgery I was bedridden for several more days and visited by so many loving family members and friends. My longtime friend, Larry Goettch, arrived again on my final day to help get me home and into the house. In time, I was able to walk but, even today, cold weather causes extreme pain in my right hip. The man who caused the accident lived for one week and of course, he had very little insurance as he was with a special company that only dealt with extremely high risk people. As

you could imagine, this ordeal was again very difficult on Pam but, as always, she proved herself a saint.

The one thing that always kept me going was wisdom from my father, who would say, "If this is the worst thing that ever happens to you, you're a very lucky guy." Whether I was a child who fell and skinned my knee, as an athlete who could no longer compete or as an adult with more serious concerns, I would always recall his words. Never once did they fail me. They would help me to keep my head held high, to never feel sorry for myself and to always keep my life in perspective. Thank you, Dad. I love you.